DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 063 537 CG 007 098

AUTHOR Carlson, Keith W.
TITLE Increasing Verbal Empathy as a Function of Feedback and Instructions.
INSTITUTION Middle Tennessee State Univ., Murfreesboro.
PUB DATE 69
NOTE 10p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Counseling Effectiveness; Counselor Attitudes; *Counselor Characteristics; *Counselor Evaluation; Counselor Performance; Counselors; *Counselor Training; Empathy; Evaluation Techniques

ABSTRACT

Counselor-trainee response uncertainty and delayed supervisor feedback are two apparent difficulties when looking at the normal practicum procedures from a learning theory frame of reference. Twenty-four counselor-trainees were randomly assigned to three experimental groups and one control group, ie., immediate feedback, feedback and instructions, equipment present, and control. Available to the three experimental groups during treatment was an FM-radio system enabling supervisors to communicate to the counselor-trainees. Pre-and post-audio tapes were selected and rated on empathy. An analyses of variance on the pre- and post- differences in ratings were computed resulting in a significant "F" ratio (p less than .05). Subsequent multiple comparisons showed all experimental groups significant when compared to the control group (p less than .01). The results showed that all experimental conditions significantly increased counselor-trainees' empathic responses. (Author)

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CG 007 098

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 063537

# Increasing Verbal Empathy as a Function of Feedback and Instructions

By - Keith W. Carlson

A primary objective of counselor education programs is to train persons to become effective counselors. Research in the area of counseling has indicated that when counseling has been effective, certain core behaviors were manifested in the counselor's performance. The three most frequently studied behaviors are called accurate empathy, respect, and counselor genuineness. The other behaviors, less empirically established, are called concreteness, self disclosure, confrontation, and immediacy of relationship (Truax and Carkhuff, 1967; Carkhuff and Berenson, 1967; Carkhuff, 1969a).

The relationships between empathy and respect as measured by Truax and Carkhuff's rating scales (1967) and counselee change have been studied. The results showed that at least minimum and especially high counselor performance levels of these two core behaviors were positively and significantly related to positive counselee change (Truax, 1963; Truax, Carkhuff, and Kodman, 1965; Truax and Carkhuff, 1967).

The research related to the training of counselors in these core behaviors has indicated that these behaviors can be learned. These studies have shown that as a result of training programs counselor-trainees can function at moderately

CG 007 098

facilitative or therapeutic levels nearing those of experienced therapists. In addition, these learned behaviors were shown to benefit the counselees with whom the counselor-trainees worked (Carkhuff and Truax, 1965; Berenson, Carkhuff, and Myrus, 1966; Carkhuff, Piaget, and Peirce, 1968).

Most counselor education programs attempt through the counseling practicum experience to provide their counselor-trainees with learning situations which allow them to increase their counseling effectiveness. This effectiveness is, partly, contingent upon the ability of the counselor-trainees to apply the concepts and techniques they have learned through their didactic work to the actual counseling situation. The practicum courses characteristically furnish the counselor-trainee with experiences in counseling, didactic counseling seminars, and an opportunity for participation in critique sessions based either on observation of the counseling experience and/or audio or video playbacks of the counseling session.

When examining these practicum experiences relative to the theory of learning best exemplified by Skinner (1938), two difficulties are apparent. First, during the counseling session the counselor-trainee is uncertain whether his verbal response constitutes effective counseling behavior. Second, positive or negative reinforcement expressed by observers is delayed until the end of the interview of in some instances for a longer period of time.

Using learning theory concepts (Skinner, 1938) and the results of verbal conditioning studies (Greenspoon, 1955, Krasner 1958) counselor educators have attempted to eliminate the time differential between counseling behavior and supervisor feedback. Equipment such as lights and modified hearing aids have been utilized and the results of this research has been mixed (Goff, 1968; Reddy, 1969).

The equipment, however, provides a means of applying learning theory concepts to counselor training. These also offer a basis for handling the difficulties of counselor-trainee uncertainty and of delayed reinforcement as well as possibly facilitating effetiveness in the counseling practicum.

The purpose of this study, then, was to discover if a counselor-training method employing immediate verbal feedback and feedback and instructions would increase the qualitative levels of empathic verbal performance of counselor-trainees.

Method

Twenty-four counselor-trainees enrolled in master level school counseling practicums were randomly assigned to the following treatment conditions: immediate feedback (E), feedback and instructions (CE1), equipment present (CE2), and control(C).

Five supervisors were selected and trained over a seven hour training period to rate empathic verbal responses from recorded audio tapes using an expanded version of Carkhuff's

rating scale, "Empathic Understanding in Interpersonal Functioning" (1969b). They were also trained to give immediate verbal reinforcement to the counselor-trainees in the E group and to use the communication system (radio, ear plug, and an FM wireless mike). The inter-rater reliability for the training period as computed using an analysis of variance was 88 (cf Winer, 1962). Three other supervisors were selected and trained to use the communication system for the CE1 group.

A tape of a counseling session was taken from each counselor-trainee one week prior to the first training period. Three three-minute segments were randomly selected from each tape and were rated on accurate empathy to determine each counselor-trainee's operant level.

During the first training period each counselor-trainee was scheduled for six counseling sessions distributed throughout three consecutive weeks. The treatment procedures for the four groups during the 1st training period were as follows: (1) All counselor-trainees participated in the usual practcum didactic seminars.

(2) The counselor-trainees in the E, CE1, and CE2 groups took their parts of the communications system with them into each counseling session. Each radio was turned on, and each counselor-trainee could only hear the responses of his supervisor.

(3) The conditions for the counselor-trainees in the E group consisted of receiving immediate verbal feedback from the supervisor during each counseling session through the communication system. This feedback was given when the counselor-trainees' accurate empathic responses were judged above their operant level. The feedback was a verbal reinforcing stimulus consisting of two words, "excellent response" (Kintz and Pappas, 1965).

(4) The conditions for the counselor-trainees in the CE1 group consisted of random communication from the conversation supervisors through the communication system. The random communication was characterized by either feedback or instructions. These counselor-trainees did not receive the reinforcing stimulus of "excellent response" following their empathic responses.

(5) The conditions for each counselor-trainee in the CE2 group consisted of his having his part of the communication system in his presence, turned on, and an ear plug connected and in his ear. They did not receive either the reinforcing stimulus or any communication through the communication system.

(6) Counselor-trainees in the C group proceeded through the counseling sessions in the usual manner, i.e., without any type of immediate feedback, conversation, or equipment.

After a ten-day period in which no training was given, the counselor-trainees were scheduled for two counseling sessions during a one-week period. The counselor-trainees received the

me treatment and controlled conditions for the second training period as in the first training period.

The tape of the first counseling session immediately following the second training period was collected from each counselor-trainee. Three three-minuate segments were randomly selected from each tape and were rated on accurate empathy. The pre- and post-ratings were then statistically treated.

## Results

Measures of inter-and intra-rater reliability were obtained from the ratings made on the pre- and post-taped segments. The inter-rater reliability correlation coefficients were .69 and .71 ($p < .01$) on the pre- and post-ratings respectively (cf. Winer, 962). Intra-rater reliability correlation coefficients on the pre-ratings ranged from +.64 ($p < .05$) to +.79 ($p < .01$) The post-tape intra-rater reliability correlation coefficients which ranged from +.31 ($p > .05$) to +.74 ($p < .01$), with three of the four correlation coefficients significant above the .05 level (Spence, et.al., 1968).

An analysis of variance was calculated on the difference between pre- and post-ratings of counselor-trainees' empathic responses (cf. Winer, 1962). The results showed that treatment had a significantly positive effect upon counselor-trainees empathic responses ($F = 3.16$, $df = 3/20$, $p < .05$).

Subsequent multiple comparisons (Newman-Keuls procedure, cf. Winer, 1962) indicated the three treatment group difference

means, i.e., verbal reinforcement (E), instructions and feedback (CE1), and equipment present (CE2), were significant when compared to the control group (C) mean. Also the comparisons showed that the instructions and feedback group (CE1) mean was significantly greater than the verbal reinforcement group (E) mean and in turn the E group mean was significantly greater than the CE2 group mean. All mean comparisons were significant at the .01 level.

## Discussion

The results of this study showed that the most effective way of increasing counselor-trainees' empathic verbal responses was to present the counselor-trainee immediate feedback in combination with instructions. This indication corresponded to the results of Ayllon and Azrin's (1964) work with mental patients.

This study's results also showed that the presentation of an immediate verbal reinforcing stimulus was effective in increasing empathic responses when compared to the usual procedures. This conclusion corresponded to the results of studies by Greenspoon (1951), Krasner, (1958), and especially Reddy (1969), that is, increases in specific verbal behaviors can be attained by the use of verbal reinforcement. This result indicated, as well the reinforcing potential of the word "excellent" as implied by the research by Kintz and Pappas (1965).

Finally, the study indicated the value of having a supervisor present with the opportunity to communicate with the counselor-trainee during a counseling session. The equipment present group's empathic responses were significantly greater when compared to the usual practicum procedures.

In conclusion, all treatment effects (i.e., verbal reinforcement, feedback and instructions, and equipment present, significantly increased the counselor-trainees' empathic verbal responses when compared to the counselor-trainees who were going through their practicum with usual procedures (delayed feedback). The three treatments were also significantly greater when compared to one another in the following order: CE1 > E > CE2.

The application of learning theory concepts to the practicum experience in the training of counselors indicated two apparent difficulties, counselor-trainee behavioral uncertainty and delayed feedback. The results of this study indicated that bodh of these difficulties can be dealt with by providing, especially, feedback and instructions to give counselor-trainees immediate knowledge of the quality of their verbal responses. This immediate feedback or the combination of feedback and instructions also increases significantly the quality of counselor-trainee empathic responses over as short a period of time as eight training sessions when compared to usual practicum procedures. The results of this study offer an alternative to the training of those verbal responses indicated as appropriate techniques for effective counseling and psychotherapy.

REFERENCES


Ayllon, T., Arzin, NH. Reinforcement and instructions with mental patients. Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior, 1964, 7, 329-331.

Berenson, B.G., Carkhuff,R.R., & Myrus, Pamela. The interpersonal functions and training of college students. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1966, 13, 441-446.

Carkhuff, R.R. Helping and human relations: selection and training. (Vol.1) New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1969a

Carkhuff, R.R. Scales for assessment of interpersonal functioning. Springfield, Mass.: American International College - College for Human Relations and Community Affairs, 1969b (Memeographed.)

Carkhuff, R.R., & Berenson, B.B. Beyond counseling and therapy. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1967.

Carkhuff, R.R., Piaget,G, & Pierce, R. The development of skills in interpersonal functioning. Counselor Education and Supervision, 1966, 7, 102-106.

Carkhuff, R.R., & Truax, C.B. Lay mental health counseling: the effects of lay group counseling, Journal of Consulting Psychology, 1965, 29, 426-431.

Goff, D.J. Operant conditioning: a means of modifying counselor verbal behavior. (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Dakota, 1968).

Greenspoon, J. The reinforcing effect of two spoken sounds on the frequency of two responses, American Journal of Psychology, 1955, 68, 409-416.

Krasner, L. Studies of the conditioning of verbal behavior. Psychological Bulletin, 1958, 55, 148-170.

Kintz, B.L., & Pappas, JP. A scaling evaluation of the effectiveness of verbal reinforcers, The Journal of Psychology 1965, 59, 359-365.

Reddy, W.B. The qualitative aspects of feedback in learning empathy. Counselor Education and Supervision, 1969, 8, 176-182.

Skinner, B.F. The behavior of organisms. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1938.

Spence, J.T., et. al. Elementary statistics. New York: Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1968.

Truax, C.B. Effective ingredients in psychotherapy: an approach to unraveling the patient-therapist interaction symposium: the empirical emphasis in psychotherapy. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1963, 10, 256-263.

Truax, C.B., & Carkhuff, R.R. Toward effective counseling and psychotherapy: training and practice. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967.

Trauax, C.B., Carkhuff, R.R., & Kodman, R. Relationship between therapists-offered conditions and patient change in group psythotherapy. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1965, 21, 327-329.

Winer, B.J. Statistical principles in experimental design. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1962.